

remained." Better death with honour than a lingering decline.¹ Russia's choice was equally intelligible. Sazonoff, like the Foreign Ministers in the other capitals, was convinced that he had no alternative. He inherited a long tradition from which he had neither the wish nor the power to depart. Russia's inability to take up the challenge in the Bosnian crisis was a bitter memory, and nobody could expect her to submit to such spectacular humiliation again. Since the main purpose of the Triple Entente, as defined by Sazonoff, was to prevent the domination of Europe by Germany, now was the time to make a stand. As Berchtold saw the long arm of Russia in the Serajevo murders, so the Russian Foreign Minister interpreted the ultimatum as a blow not only at King Peter but at the Tsar. Had Russia left her Servian *prottgi* for a second time to the tender mercies of the Hapsburgs, she would have forfeited her old claim to be the champion of the Balkan Skvs and have handed over the Near East to the control of the Central Powers. Though not bound by treaty to intervene, she could no more be expected to remain neutral in face of an attack on Belgrad than England in face of a violation of Belgian neutrality. The same instinctive pride of a Great Power which compelled Vienna to throw down the glove compelled St. Petersburg to pick it up. Russia's intervention in the Austro-Serb quarrel automatically brought Germany into the fray. When Francis Joseph inquired whether he might rely on her support, William II and his Chancellor answered without hesitation that he could. A refusal would have devitalized, if not actually destroyed, the partnership of 1879, which was the basis of German policy. The error was not in promising help but in allowing Austria alone to steer the ship. In entering on such a

perilous voyage,
the German Government should have insisted
on consultation
throughout, weighing every article in the
ultimatum and dis-
cussing every point in the reply. In a memorable
passage in his
Reflections and ^collections Bismarck declared
that Germany
could fight for the vital interests of Austria as a
Great Power
with a good conscience, but he would never
have consented
to allow the fate of his people to be decided by a
foreign will.
After recklessly throwing the reins on the neck
of the Austrian
steed, Bethmann strove in-vain to hold it
back. He was a
great gentleman, but ^his lack of skill in the
difficult art of
diplomacy was a Calamity
France played a smaller *role* in the days of
decision than any